

REMARKS

Claims 2, 10 and 18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 2, 10 and 18 are amended. Support for the amendments to the claims can be found in the specification at, for example, page 4, lines 14-21. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Cabrera at the interview held January 10, 2007 are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

The Office Action rejected claims 2, 10 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Inui (U.S. Patent No. 5,204,821) and Andrade (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0109950) in view of Akihiro (JP 11-312197). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, none of the applied references, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest a parts procurement system that includes a virtual production line and correction means for correcting the virtual production line, wherein detecting the production progress includes detecting the actual completion of production of objects obtained from the production line as recited in independent claim 2 and similarly recited in independent claims 10 and 18.

The Office Action admits that Inui and Andrade fail to teach or suggest "some limitations" of claims 2, 10 and 18 (Office Action, page 3, lines 12-13). The Office Action refers to Akihiro as allegedly teaching these features. However, Akihiro merely teaches a system to easily generate, correct and change a schedule plan by deciding the delivery required days of respective sub-units from lead times by means of each work process. See the Abstract. None of Inui, Andrade and Akihiro teach or suggest the correction means and/or

the way in which a virtual production line is corrected and parts are ordered, as recited in the present claims.

Inui merely teaches an order issuing managing system that scans a parts master file and extracts required data relating to parts that need to be ordered. See the Abstract. Andrade merely teaches identifying a total amount of each product that a plant has to produce in one period of time, identifying an operation route and productivity for each product on each available resource, and identifying setup constraints. See the Abstract. However, none of Inui or Andrade teach or suggest changing a virtual production line wherein detecting the production progress includes actual production results obtained from the production line, as recited in claims 2, 10 and 18.

Akihiro does not remedy the deficiencies of Inui and Andrade. Akihiro teaches correcting the production line on the basis of design change (paragraph [0019]), and changes in the lead time of the bill of materials master 101 (paragraph [0065]). However, Akihiro fails to teach or suggest detecting the actual production results obtained from the production line and thereby making appropriate changes to a virtual production line based on the detection of the actual results. A change in the virtual production line on the basis of the production progress is described in the specification at, for example, page 4, lines 14-21, and page 8, lines 16-21, where it is described that production results are obtained and used such that if the actual production results are different from the plan, then the virtual production plan is changed accordingly. Parts ordering is thus conducted appropriately. Akihiro does not teach or suggest such a feature to update a virtual line based on actual production results. Thus, none of Inui, Andrade or Akihiro teach or suggest changing the virtual production line wherein detecting the production progress includes actual production results obtained from the production line, as recited in claims, 2, 10 and 18.

For at least these reasons, a combination of the applied references fails to disclose or suggest the features of claims 2, 10 and 18. Thus, claims 2, 10 and 18 are patentable over a combination of the applied references. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2, 10 and 18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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